

February 23, 2023

Members of the Education Appropriations Subcommittee

State Capitol Hartford, CT 06106

RE: Proposed Budget on Education

My name is Aidee Nieves, a parent and City Council President, proudly serving the 137th district in the City of Bridgeport. I want to begin by thanking you for your unrelenting service to our State.

I'm testifying today to encourage all of you to redouble your efforts in ensuring our state, but most especially, our highest-need communities receive the resources they desperately need. The time is now. The support is here. The funds are at a historical level.

Our urban cities, like mine, face an issue rooted in inadequate and under-resourced public school education for a majority of Connecticut's Black and Latino children. It is an insult to hear the State is in great fiscal shape with a surplus of \$6.4 Billion, yet this doesn't reach communities who truly need it.

As City Council President, I have a responsibility to all students regardless of the type of public school they attend. I fight tirelessly every day to create opportunities and attend to the ever growing needs of our city. Our most poor and disadvantaged are dignified citizens of this State and deserve to be treated accordingly by this administration. This budget speaks loudly to the contrary and we need your help to ensure that students in communities like mine are supported. They, as you know, experience more than their fair share of challenges!

Under Governor Lamont's budget, public charter schools did not receive an increase in funding. My understanding is that we are looking at at least 700 million dollars to close the educational and racial gap in funding, and that was prior to the State releasing new numbers that indicate a substantially higher needs cost to educate our youth.

I am disheartened to see that the Lamont Administration's new budget does not fully support our city. I signed up to serve my city of Bridgeport with the hopes of seeing a vision become reality- of getting my town to achieve a goal of limitless opportunities for our citizens- but it makes the work that much more challenging when our students are not on an equal footing!

The power of quality education is the greatest equalizer for our children, I therefore ask that all students are funded according to their needs. It bears repeating that we can do it in a year when the financial means are available to make it happen!

As a parent in the City of Bridgeport, I didn't have the luxury to differentiate between traditional public, public charter, magnet or votech. I simply wanted a quality option. I know just how much and how important it is that our state has great educational options for parents, especially those who look like me and who don't feel like they have many options to choose from.

The political agenda of adults whose children have access to quality schools should never come before the well being of our state's most vulnerable and underserved children who are relying on you to help. . Each year the State deprioritizes any student, is a year the opportunity gap widens. Each year we neglect students in our vulnerable communities will be another year you will see me fighting for inclusion for all students.

The Governor has shown where his priorities in education lay, but hundreds who testified are watching your impending actions. We need your support in sending a clear message to the Governor that our education system is only as strong as how we invest in it. Thank you for your time and I appreciate any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

City Council President- Bridgeport CT.
Aidee Nieves